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ABSTRACT

This 1998 Citizen Survey for Spartanburg Technical College (STC) in South Carolina, identifies the education and training needs of the service area, how STC can meet those needs, what changes need to be made in the college, and how it should promote its programs and services. Information was obtained through telephone surveys from a random sample of citizens. Results indicated that almost all of those surveyed were familiar with STC and its services, and all of those who had taken courses there responded that they were satisfied with STC and would recommend the college to others. Respondents had very positive perceptions of STC, with 99% agreeing that it provides effective, affordable, quality education that will allow graduates to get good jobs. However, the majority of those expressing opinions stated that STC is mostly a second-choice school, and one-third felt that it is a school for students with low grades. Slightly more than one-fifth of respondents expressed interest in taking courses at STC in the near future, with computer classes being most in demand. Only 9% of the respondents plan to take courses at other colleges. The most important aspects of STC included program/course offerings, convenient class times, good academic reputation, and low cost. (YKH)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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Introduction

Spartanburg Technical College (STC) continually monitors its service area to help determine the proper direction for the College as it moves into the twenty-first century. Of preeminent concern are questions such as:

- **What are the education and training needs of the service area?**
- **How can STC best meet those needs?**
- **What adjustments/ changes in the College are indicated?**
- **How should the College promote its programs and services?**

As reported in this study, the findings of the Citizen Survey provide a partial answer to these questions, as they document the following information about citizens in the STC service area:

- **how they hear about STC**
- **courses taken/plan to take at STC**
- **convenient times to take courses**
- **instructional delivery via the Internet**
- **perceptions of STC**
- **plans to attend specific colleges**
- **factors influencing selection of a college**

The instrument for this study was developed jointly by STC and J. W. Quinley and Associates. STC completed telephone surveys of 396 citizens from a random sample of over twice that number.

Experience with STC

How have you heard about Spartanburg Technical College?

• Ninety-seven percent of the respondents have heard about STC.

• Over one-third (37 percent) have heard about STC through advertising. Specific advertising sources listed by respondents were as follows:

1) TV - 20 %
2) newspapers - 15%
3) brochures - 8%
4) billboard - 2%
5) radio - 1%
6) other - 56%

• Almost one-third (31 percent) have heard about STC through 'Other' channels.

• Many citizens knew about the college through courses taken at STC.

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FIGURE 1
How Did You Hear About STC?

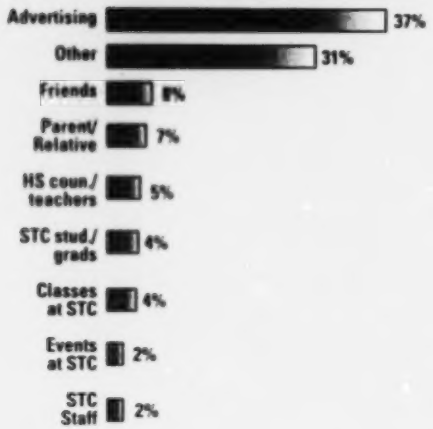


FIGURE 2
Courses Taken At STC

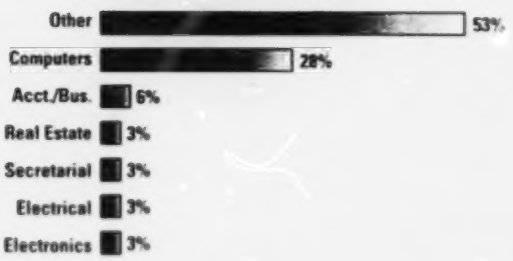
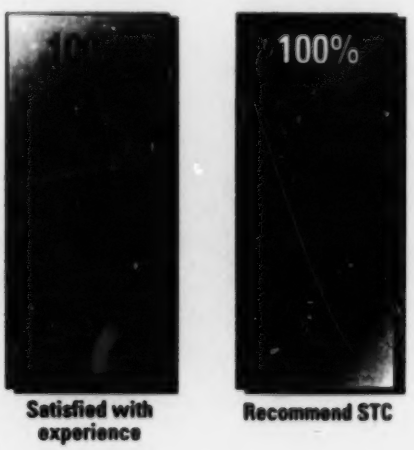


FIGURE 3
Percent Satisfied with STC and Percent that Would Recommend STC



Have you taken a course or workshop at STC?

- Twenty-five percent had taken at least one course at STC. Of those taking classes, the largest percentage (28 percent) took computer courses.
- The second largest percent (six percent) took accounting/business courses.
- Following were real estate, secretarial, electrical, and electronic courses, each at three percent.
- The remaining 53 percent of the courses taken were grouped into the 'Other' category, reflecting the great variety of courses offered by STC. A great many of the respondents took a single courses in subjects such as dance, daycare, EMT, interior design, stock market, etc.

Were you satisfied with your experience? Would you recommend STC to a friend?

- One hundred percent of these who responded this item were satisfied with their course work, and 100 percent would recommend STC to a friend.

Perceptions of STC

To determine the impressions that citizens have about STC, respondents were presented with a series of statements about STC and asked to mark "Agree," "Disagree," or "Don't Know."

- Eighty-seven percent agreed that STC is a good place to study part-time and earn a degree.
- STC offers high quality education at a price that most people can afford.
- STC is a college that students are proud to attend.
- Sixty-one percent agreed with the statement that STC is "the second choice for most students"compared to 18 percent who disagreed.
- Twenty-four percent agreed with the statement that it is "A school primarily for students with low grades" compared to 57 percent who disagreed.

TABLE 1
Perceptions of STC

POSITIVE STATEMENTS	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Good place to study part-time and earn a degree	87%	1%	12%
High quality education at a price that most can afford	87%	1%	12%
It is a college that students are proud to attend	87%	2%	11%
STC meets the education and training needs of area business and industry	84%	1%	15%
The quality of education and teaching is good	83%	1%	16%
STC responds quickly in meeting citizen needs for education	79%	3%	19%
STC graduates get good jobs	78%	1%	22%
Good place to get the first 2 years of a four-year degree	77%	8%	15%
NEGATIVE STATEMENTS			
It is the second choice for many students	61%	18%	20%
It is a college primarily for students with low grades	24%	57%	18%

Note: Percentages sometimes don't total to 100 due to rounding.

Future Plans

Do you have any interest in taking courses at STC now or in the next couple of years? What specific classes or subjects would you like to study at STC?

- Slightly more than one-fifth (22 percent) of respondents expressed an interest in taking courses at STC.
- By far, the largest amount of interest was expressed in computers, which constituted 37 percent of the subjects in which interest was expressed.
- The subjects with the next largest percentage of expressed interest were business and flower arranging, each of which accounted for 6 percent of the subjects in which interest was expressed.
- Interest in other subjects ranged from one to four percent.

If you were to take classes at STC, when is the most convenient time?

- The largest percentage (84 percent) of respondents indicated that evening was the most convenient time to take classes.
- Following in order of percentage response were: morning (78 percent), afternoon (58 percent), and weekend (54 percent).

Do you plan to take courses at any other college or university now or in the near future?

- Eight-eight percent do not plan to take courses at any other college, ten percent plan to take courses at another college, and two percent did not know.

FIGURE 4
Most Convenient Time to Take Classes

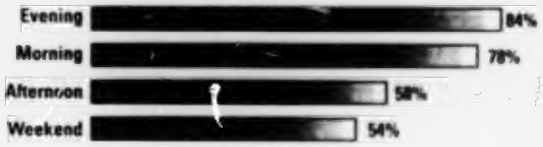


FIGURE 5
Plan To Take Courses At Any Other College

FIGURE 6
Percent with Home Computer and Percent of those with Computers also having Internet Access

Instructional Delivery

Two survey items inquired about respondents' capability of taking STC classes via the Internet. The items were:

1. Do you have a computer at home?

2. If you have a home computers do you currently have access to the Internet?

- Thirty-eight percent of those who responded to this item had a computer. Fifty-four percent did not respond to this item. It is likely that most of these non-respondents did not have a computer and thus, the reported percentage of those having a computer at home is misleading.
- Thirty-seven percent of those having a computer had access to the Internet.

Summary

Experience With STC

How have you heard about STC?

• Ninety-seven percent of the respondents have heard about STC.

• STC's most important communication channel is advertising, as, by far, the largest percentage (37 percent) have heard about STC through advertising.

Have you taken a course or workshop at STC?

• Ninety-nine of the respondents (25 percent, or one-fourth) had taken at least one course at STC, indicating that STC has a significant impact on the community. By far, the largest percentage (28 percent) took computer courses/workshops.

• One-hundred percent were satisfied with their course work, and 100 percent would recommend STC to a friend.

Perceptions of STC

• Respondents were presented with eight positively stated items and three negatively stated items and asked if they "Agreed," "Disagreed," or "Don't Know." The percentage of "Don't Knows/No Responses" was relatively small compared to findings in other surveys of this type, indicating that citizens in this study had relatively clear opinions of STC.

• Of those expressing an opinion regarding the positive statements, most citizens hold a favorable opinion of STC.

• Responses were very favorable, with 99 percent "agreeing" with five of the eight statements. Overwhelmingly, citizens felt that STC:

1) **meets the educational needs of business and industry**
2) **that STC graduates get good jobs**
3) **that STC offers high quality education that most people can afford**
4) **that the quality of education and teaching is good**
5) **that STC is a good place to study part-time and earn a degree**

• Seventy-seven percent of those expressing an opinion agreed that STC is the second choice for many students.

• Almost one-third (30 percent) agreed that STC is "A school primarily for students with low grades."

Future plans

1. Interest in taking courses at STC

• Slightly more than one-fifth (22 percent) of respondents expressed interest in taking courses at STC in the near future.

• By far, the largest amount of interest was expressed in computer classes, which constituted 37 percent of the subjects in which interest was expressed.

• The largest percentage (84 percent) indicated that the most convenient time for taking classes was the evening, followed by morning (78 percent), afternoon (58 percent), and weekends (54 percent).

2. Do you plan to take courses at any other college or university now or in the near future?

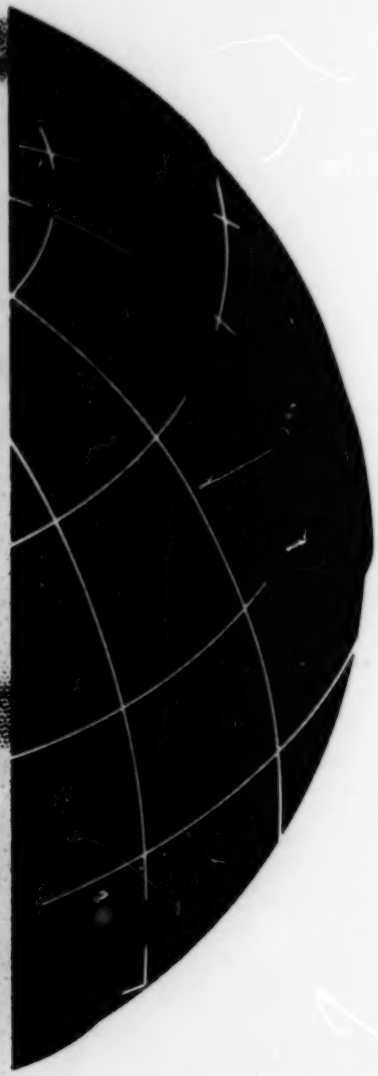
• Only 37 (9 percent) of the respondents plan to take courses at any other college.

3. Important factors in selecting a post-secondary institution:

• In every instance the majority of participants did not respond to this item, almost certainly because this is an older population that is well beyond the traditional college-going age.

• For those who responded to these items, percentages are given below for ratings of either "Important" or "Somewhat Important":

- **Offers programs/courses I want (100 percent)**
- **Good academic reputation (100 percent)**
- **Convenient times/class hours (100 percent)**
- **Low cost (99 percent)**
- **Safe campus environment (97 percent)**
- **Convenient location (97 percent)**
- **Can work while attending (96 percent)**
- **Availability of financial aid (92 percent)**
- **Availability of job placement (90 percent)**
- **Admission regardless of grades (88 percent)**
- **Accessible by public transportation (86 percent)**
- **Easy transfer of credits to 4-year colleges (75 percent)**
- **Friends attending that college (58 percent)**



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